

DSHA Increases Rental Assistance in Areas of Opportunity

Changes will offer more housing choice near job centers, quality schools

DOVER, DE – To ensure that all Delawareans have more choice of where to live, the Delaware State Housing Authority is increasing available rental assistance in Areas of Opportunity across the state, allowing families with housing vouchers to move closer to employment centers, quality schools and high-growth housing markets.

The change will apply to the State Rental Assistance Program, the federal Housing Choice Voucher program in Kent and Sussex Counties and the federal Family Unification Program. Combined, the programs offer rental assistance to more than 1,600 Delaware families.

Delaware's Areas of Opportunity are searchable by address and ZIP Code in a new DSHA map available online.

"These changes will offer more housing choice and mobility for Delawareans who want to live near good jobs and schools of their choice," said Governor Jack Markell.

"SRAP has been an especially important tool for youth aging out of foster care, people with disabilities, and many more families who need access to jobs, activities, and public transportation. With this new policy, we will help more people thrive in their communities."

This change builds on ongoing efforts by DSHA to increase access to Areas of Opportunity for Delaware's working families. Through its rental housing development programs, DSHA incentivizes new development of rental housing in high-value and high-growth housing markets. Encouraging new development in these areas both prevents the additional concentration of rental housing in distressed neighborhoods

and provides new affordable housing opportunities for working families in areas of high growth, which often have higher median incomes, higher homeownership rates and are near employment centers and quality schools.

DSHA also actively encourages developers to build new housing near sources of public transportation.

“Housing vouchers help families afford decent housing and make ends meet,” said DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi. “But they should not also constrain families to live only in certain neighborhoods.”

The maximum allowable rents paid through these rental assistance programs are set locally within guidelines defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Under the new change at DSHA, maximum rent payments will be 10 percent higher in Areas of Opportunity.

Nationally, close to half of households with housing vouchers include children. Harvard University economists recently found that using housing vouchers to help families with young children move into lower-poverty neighborhoods had “substantial benefits” for those children, including higher average earnings in adulthood.

“Where a child grows up should never determine where she ends up,” said Jane C.W. Vincent, Regional Administrator for HUD’s Mid-Atlantic region. “All families deserve the same chance to succeed—and providing new tools for families to help move into areas of higher opportunity gives them an opportunity for a better life.”

As a Public Housing Authority, DSHA manages 900 vouchers through the federal Housing Choice Voucher program in Kent and Sussex Counties.

Through the Delaware State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP), launched in 2011, DSHA helps another 700 Delawareans live independently. SRAP was designed to assist low-income Delawareans who require affordable housing and supportive services to live safely and independently in their communities.

Referrals for SRAP vouchers are made through case managers in

the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services and the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families and their partner service providers.

The federal Family Unification Program serves families and Delaware children aging out foster care who are in need of safe and affordable housing.

"The new higher payment standard will open more opportunities for housing which will assist our participants in securing housing that will address the most basic need of shelter," said Felicia Kellum, Independent Living Program Manager for the Division of Family Services at the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families.

"In having this need met, the youth will be better positioned to further their education and improve their employability. The increase in the payment standard will continue our efforts to address the needs of this vulnerable population and is greatly appreciated."

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